



# JOHN MILTON ACADEMY TRUST

Ambition · Aspiration · Excellence

Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> January, 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

## **National Lockdown: Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

Although speculation had been mounting in the media, we are aware that the Prime Minister's announcement of an immediate lockdown including primary and secondary schools, may have come as a shock to some parents, carers and pupils. We have now received initial guidance from the Department of Education concerning school closures and felt that it was important to share what we know at this stage.

**In line with the Department's requirement, all Trust schools have opened today for the children of key (critical) workers and for other pupils who, for a variety of reasons, need to be in school rather than at home. All other pupils are now moving to remote learning.**

This action has been taken because it is clear that the new variant of COVID is highly infectious and transmission rates in pupils of school-age are far greater than those in other age groups. Whilst children themselves are often asymptomatic, the school environment acts as a vector for transmission and COVID can be passed quickly to others, particularly adults.

Safety remains of paramount importance and risk assessments have been updated in light of the new strain. All schools are working to accommodate eligible children in school and to support all others by providing high quality home learning. In order to assist us in our work, it would be helpful if parents/carers could take note of the following information.

## **Key (Critical) Workers and Other Groups**

Initial surveys have been conducted across all schools and a list of the accredited key (critical) worker employment groups has been attached to this letter. Please note that parents/carers requesting a key (critical) worker place must be currently employed and working in a relevant employment area in order to qualify for a place. Those in part-time work, or on shift patterns, will qualify for the periods when they are at work.

The Trust has a legal obligation to minimise the number of staff and pupils on school sites throughout the lockdown, but we also appreciate that some parents/carers may be uncertain as to their own status as a key worker and may well be seeking clarification themselves.

Given the Christmas break, and the fact that the lockdown will continue until February half-term as a minimum, new "bubbles" will be formed and retained to cover this period. We will endeavour to accommodate all eligible pupils in these arrangements and have been advised by the Department for Education that proof of key (critical) worker employment can be requested.

**Bacton**  
Primary School

**Cedars Park**  
Primary School

**Mendlesham**  
Primary School

**Stowupland**  
High School

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Other groups of pupils, including those with EHCPs, are also strongly encouraged to attend school. If you are contacted by your child's school with the offer of a place, please do take advantage of this. If you have any concerns relating to attendance, please contact your child's school so that we can provide the reassurance needed.

### **Free School Meals**

At present, the Government has not indicated a return to the voucher scheme which operated during the last national lockdown. However, all pupils attending school (in all groups) will receive a free school meal, irrespective of whether or not they have qualified for free school meals in the past.

In order to support families working at home, it is our intention to look at a local solution for free school meals. We are presently exploring additional information provided by the Department for Education and further details will be communicated as soon as possible.

### **Public Tests and Examinations**

There is now an acknowledgement that the vast majority of public examinations will not be able to run in the summer as planned. The Key Stage 4 and 5 BTEC exams scheduled for January 2021 are taking place and the Secretary of State has been asked to work with Ofqual to establish alternative arrangements for all other examinations.

Assessment has been an area of enormous concern, causing considerable stress and anxiety to pupils, parents/carers and staff last academic year. Sector leaders such as the Confederation of School Trusts will be lobbying hard to ensure a timely response to the question of tests and examinations and to reiterate the need for assessment arrangements which are fair and robust across all schools and providers.

### **Personal Information**

As you will appreciate, we may need to contact families at very short notice during this lockdown. It is really important that schools have accurate information relating to all pupils on roll. If you need to update any details (addresses, health needs, emergency numbers etc) please contact your child's school as soon as possible.

There is now a strong consensus that the solution to the current lockdown lies in effective testing and vaccination. It is increasingly likely that educational personnel will be prioritised for vaccination and I am pleased to report that we are continuing with arrangements for Lateral Flow Device (LFD) testing at Stowupland. The testing equipment has arrived in school and as soon as all risk assessments have been completed and insurance cover confirmed, the school will be able to begin regular testing of staff and

pupils. Initially, this process will cover staff and pupils attending the school site during lockdown, but it will then be rolled out to others as soon as possible.

Trustees, executive personnel and school leaders are continuing to work extremely closely together during these unprecedented times and staff across all sites – both teaching and support – are demonstrating tremendous commitment and resilience. We appreciate that this lockdown has been announced at very short notice and would like to thank all parents and carers for their continued patience and understanding.

Yours sincerely



Karen D Grimes  
Chief Executive Officer

 HM Government



**DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION CORONAVIRUS HELPLINE**

**0800 046 8687**

8am to 6pm (Monday to Friday)

[DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk](mailto:DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk)

## **Key Worker Employment Groups (Critical Workers)**

*Information from the Department for Education updated on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2021*

### **Critical workers**

Parents whose work is critical to the coronavirus (COVID-19) and EU transition response include those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors outlined in the following sections. Children with at least one parent or carer who is a critical worker can go to school or college if required.

### **Health and social care**

This includes, but is not limited to, doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, care workers, and other frontline health and social care staff including volunteers; the support and specialist staff required to maintain the UK's health and social care sector; those working as part of the health and social care supply chain, including producers and distributors of medicines and medical and personal protective equipment.

### **Education and childcare**

This includes:

- childcare
- support and teaching staff
- social workers
- specialist education professionals who must remain active during the coronavirus (COVID-19) response to deliver this approach

### **Key public services**

This includes:

- those essential to the running of the justice system
- religious staff
- charities and workers delivering key frontline services
- those responsible for the management of the deceased
- journalists and broadcasters who are providing public service broadcasting

### **Local and national government**

This only includes those administrative occupations essential to the effective delivery of:

- the coronavirus (COVID-19) response, and the delivery of and response to EU transition
- essential public services, such as the payment of benefits and the certification or checking of goods for import and export (including animal products, animals, plants and food), including in government agencies and arms length bodies

### **Food and other necessary goods**

This includes those involved in food:

- production
- processing
- distribution
- sale and delivery
- as well as those essential to the provision of other key goods (for example hygienic and veterinary medicines)

## **Public safety and national security**

This includes:

- police and support staff
- Ministry of Defence civilians
- contractor and armed forces personnel (those critical to the delivery of key defence and national security outputs and essential to the response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak and EU transition)
- fire and rescue service employees (including support staff)
- National Crime Agency staff
- those maintaining border security, prison and probation staff and other national security roles, including those overseas

## **Transport and border**

This includes those who will keep the air, water, road and rail passenger and freight transport modes operating during the coronavirus (COVID-19) response and EU transition, including those working on transport systems through which supply chains pass and those constructing or supporting the operation of critical transport and border infrastructure through which supply chains pass.

## **Utilities, communication and financial services**

This includes:

- staff needed for essential financial services provision (including but not limited to workers in banks, building societies and financial market infrastructure)
- the oil, gas, electricity and water sectors (including sewerage)
- information technology and data infrastructure sector and primary industry supplies to continue during the coronavirus (COVID-19) response
- key staff working in the civil nuclear, chemicals, telecommunications (including but not limited to network operations, field engineering, call centre staff, IT and data infrastructure, 999 and 111 critical services)
- postal services and delivery
- payments providers
- waste disposal sectors



Department  
for Education